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SUBJECT: Media Reaction - Op-ed on Foreign Minister Bildt's impact on Swedish EU politics

On May 10, Peter Wolodarski, Political Editor of the independent liberal Stockholm morning daily "Dagens Nyheter" editorialized on what he calls the end of the Bildt era:

"The Swedish political temperature is still low, despite EU Parliament elections being less than one month away. In the Sifo poll published yesterday [Saturday May 9th], 40 percent of the polled said they were not planning on voting....

"What makes this election especially interesting is the large shifts that have taken place on the Swedish political scene over the past few years. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's total overhaul of the Moderate Party is continuing into the EU area as well. Together with the Green Party, the Moderate Party stands for the most obvious shift in course since the last election....

"During its campaign kick-off last Saturday, the Moderate Party highlighted employment, refugee policy and the environment as their profile questions. The EU should not interfere in Swedish labor market regulations, the Moderate Party believes, a party that claims it wants to safeguard "the Swedish model." Concerning refugees, the party believes that mutual regulation is required as Sweden seems to be taking in too many compared to other countries....

"Of course there is a Moderate Party interest in the future for the EU, particularly on the climate issue. Regarding criminality, economic freedom and the EMU, we can still recognize the old line. But for anyone who remembers Carl Bildt's involvement in the past the difference is striking....

"In his book 'Mission: Europe' from 2003 Bildt argued for a federation of national states stretching from Russia to the Atlantic, from the Arctic Ocean to the Mediterranean. The main driving force for him was to secure peace, freedom and the developments in our part of the world. Carl Bildt may today be Sweden's Foreign Affairs Minister, but he has had little say in his party's election platform....

"Among the established parties, the Left Party and the Liberal Party represent two extremes. Lars Ohly and his fellow Left Party members want Sweden to get out of the EU because the cooperation is based on "a supranational rightist policy bound by treaties." According to the Left Party, the EU is an undemocratic super state governed by evil market powers. Peace, welfare and solidarity have never been prioritized, the authors of the program claim, quite clearly in contradiction to all better judgment. The writing is so skewed and far-reaching that the party in its EU-hostility is in close competition with the ultra right-wing Sweden Democrats....

"On the other side, one finds the Liberal Party. 'We believe in Europe,' the party has named its program, and in following that theme the program is visionary and strongly EU-positive. The Liberal Party is not trying to woo any EU-critics, but clearly states that it is in favor of a federal cooperation, which is 'in stark contrast to nationalism, protectionism and closed borders'....

The party's formulations are reminiscent of Carl Bildt's book from 2003, which aimed towards stirring involvement and curiosity in the future for the EU. Six years later, this purpose has hardly become less urgent, particularly not during times of financial crisis and an upcoming Swedish EU-presidency."

SILVERMAN